

# Dealing with Yellowjackets



Yellowjackets are social wasps that belong to the same general group of wasps as hornets. Some yellowjacket species build papery aerial nests; other species build a paper nest in the ground, often in rodent burrows. The ground-dwelling species may also nest in concealed areas, such as wall voids. Most species have the typical black and yellow warning coloration characteristic of most bees and wasps.

Each colony starts with one mated queen that overwinters in a sheltered place. In early spring, she chews wood and other plant materials and begins to build her papery nest. She lays eggs in the cells of the small nest and, after the eggs hatch, tends the eggs and larvae herself. Adult yellowjackets feed mainly on fruit juices and other sweets, but also capture soft-bodied insects—caterpillars, flies, and aphids—to feed immatures. After the first brood of yellowjackets develops into adults, the colony grows rapidly. The new adults have specific duties: foraging workers collect nest-building materials, food, and water; nurses tend the larvae; and guards protect the colony. The queen concentrates on laying eggs. By the end of the summer, the nest often has multiple combs, thousands of cells, and thousands of workers.

It is the foraging individuals, especially during the late summer when the colony is very large, that cause problems. The greatest period of foraging activity is just after sunrise and continues until sunset. Studies have shown foragers make one to three foraging trips per hour. They return to the nest at sunset and all yellowjackets are in the

nest during the night. No foraging occurs on cold or wet days. Most of the time, foraging occurs within 500 feet of the nest.

The most effective method of dealing with yellowjackets is to locate their colony and treat it directly. Yellowjackets frequently nest in abandoned rodent holes, in shrubs, logs, piles of rocks, and other protected sites. Entrance holes sometimes have bare earth around them. For aerial nests, look in trees, branches, and wires. Inspect carefully around eaves and windows. Nest openings can often be recognized by observing the wasps

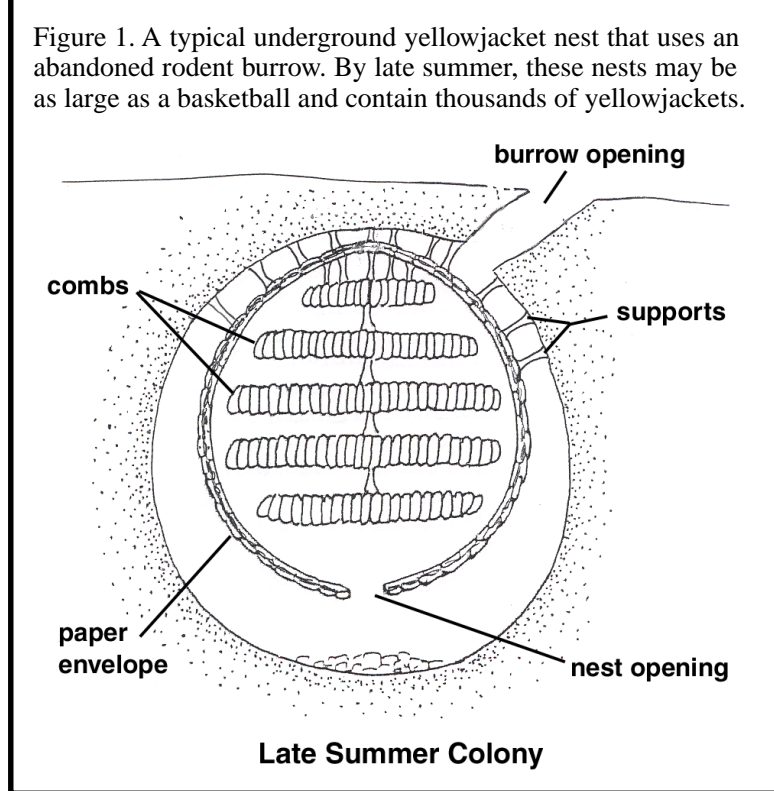
black to them.)

### Underground Colonies

Treat the underground nest with a dust or liquid insecticide, then seal the nest entrance with a shovel full of dirt or a rock. The dust formulation is preferred because the yellowjackets attempting to leave the colony will track dust and contaminate the brood and other colony members. Re-treatment may be necessary after a few days.

### Nests in Wall Voids

Treat the entrance into the structure with a dust formulation, but do not seal the entrance hole because workers may attempt to enter the building through inside openings.



entering and leaving.

Treating colonies should always be done in the evening when all the wasps are in their nests. Approach the colony carefully, since some yellowjacket guards will be protecting the colony. If light is needed, use a flashlight covered by red cellophane. (Like many other insects, yellowjackets do not see red light—it appears

### Aerial Nests

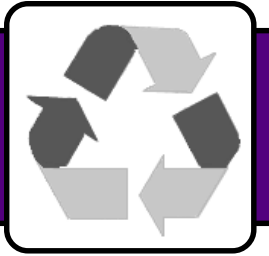
Treat the nest with liquid or aerosol jet insecticide sprays after dark. Knocking down the nest without treating it, is ineffective since the wasps may rebuild the nest.

### Foraging Yellowjackets

Because yellowjackets are scavengers, they are frequently

See YELLOWJACKETS on page 11

## Environmental Focus



# Is Your Home a Hide-Away for Pests?

Cooler temperatures are coming and you may find a few uninvited guests making their way into your home. Millipedes, crickets, and wolf spiders are some common “accidental invaders” that stumble into homes trying to escape the chill of fall. Most of these visitors are not going to cause a problem because they won’t be able to survive in the home environment. Our homes are too dry and there probably won’t be enough food to keep these pests alive.

Many of these short-lived visitors can be controlled without pesticides—a flyswatter, broom, or vacuum will work nicely. Gently sweep the beneficial wolf spider into a jar and release it outside away from the house. Snakes who find their way into the home should also be captured and released.

Accidental invaders are not the only creatures looking for a safe haven. Mice and rats quickly take advantage of unchecked openings around the home. These pests, unlike accidental invaders, can take up permanent residence in your house. Their control can be more difficult and expensive, if they become established.

Protect your home from unwanted guests by “pest-proofing.” By taking a few moments now to inspect your property, you may prevent rodents, snakes, and insects from using your home as a

winter hideaway.

### Here are some things you might look for:

- Make sure all cracks around the outside of your house are sealed so mice, rats, snakes, and insects can’t squeeze in (rats can get through openings 1/2" in diameter—mice can get through holes no bigger than a dime). To fill openings, use something strong like cement, mortar, or caulk. Steel wool can be used as a temporary fix. Stuffing cracks with cloth won’t help and rodents may use it for bedding.

- Holes and other rodent damage in your home or garage need to be repaired and protected. Make repairs and, if necessary, cover the damage with hardware cloth (1/4" squares). If you cover rodent damage with a piece of wood, rodents may chew right through it again.

- Doors, windows, and screens should be in good repair and fit tight. Caulking will keep pests out and help lower fuel bills.

- Do your floor drains need screens? If so, ask a professional to help you select the screen size.

- Check around your dryer vent and other openings to make sure they aren’t being used as a handy way to get into your house.

- Removing leaves and grass clippings from around the foundation, cleaning out window wells and general yard clean-up will get rid of hiding places for pests near the home. (SC)

# Is There a Cancer Epidemic in the United States?

The media and many advocacy groups would have the American public believe the U.S. is in

the midst of a cancer “epidemic.” These groups perpetuate the myth there has been a sudden surge in new cancer cases and deaths and unknown environmental agents are the cause. A careful review of the facts reveals:

- \* With a few exceptions, primarily lung and AIDS-related cancers, there has been little overall increase in the number of new cases of cancer reported or the number of cancer deaths over the last 40 years.

- \* The number of deaths caused by many forms of cancer has actually decreased, including deaths from Hodgkin’s disease and cancers of the cervix, uterus (endometrium), stomach, rectum, testis, bladder, and thyroid.

- \* Modern screening methods, such as mammography for breast cancer and the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test for prostate cancer, create the appearance of a sudden increase in new cancer cases. There is no correspondingly large increase in mortality from these forms of cancer, indicating we are finding more previously undetected malignancies.

- \* Most cancers are related to known lifestyle factors. Among the proven causes of cancer are: tobacco, diet, alcohol, radiation, certain sexually transmitted diseases or reproductive patterns, and sunlight. Current research indicates some individuals may also have a genetic predisposition for certain forms of cancer.

- \* “Chemicals” in food and the environment do not have a significant impact on overall cancer risk in the U.S.

See CANCER on page 11

## Be Prepared for Head Lice

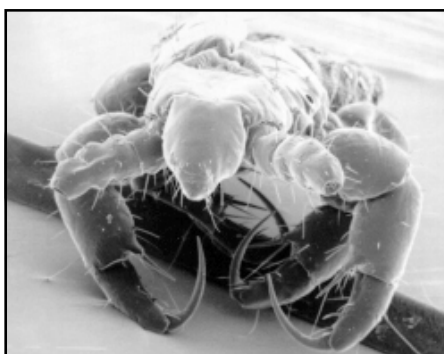
**Did you know children may not scratch their heads until they’ve had head lice for up to 30 days?** Some children don’t even scratch when they have head lice.

Don’t wait for the “scratching.” Learn how to manage head lice in your family, school, or child care setting. The video, “Removing Head Lice Safely,” is now being shown on Cable Channel 5. This 2000 “Telly” award-winning video can be viewed on:

Tuesdays	3 and 10:30 p.m.
Thursdays	1 p.m.
Sundays	5 and 9 p.m.

As always, the video is available on demand via the internet at <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/lanco/enviro/pest/lice>

For more information, call or stop by the extension office to pick up your free copy of the factsheets Head Lice Management and Quick Guide to Removing Head Lice Safely. If you would like to purchase the video, call the office at 402-441-7180 for a brochure. (SC)



Magnified head louse

### Thank You 5CityTV!

We would like to recognize Bill Luxford at 5CityTV for helping us make this video available to Lincoln residents. In addition to the video appearing on Cable Channel 5, 5CityTV has also made it possible for you to view the video on the internet at your convenience.